Welfare fund for Workers

*631. SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to set up welfare fund for agricultural workers and those employed in the salt industry, fish processing industry and fish farms;

(b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the number of workers as on the 31st March, 2002, alongwith the average work days available to the above categories of workers in a year, State-wise and categary-wise?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) and (b) The Government has set up Welfare Funds for some categories of unorganised labour like beedi workers, cine workers and certain non-coal mine workers. It is the constant endeavour of the Government to provide some kind of social security cover to the unorganised workers in other sectors including salt industry, fish processing industry and fish farms etc. by exploring the possibility of constituting similar welfare fund mechanism. There is no proposal under consideration of the Government set up welfare fund for agricultural workers, but the Government has launched the Krishi Shramik Samajik Suraksha Yojana-2001 to cover 10 lakh agricultural workers in selected 50 districts over a span of 3 years. The scheme aims to provide life-cum-accident insurance, money-back, pension and superannuation benefits. The agricultural worker is required to pay Re. 1/- per day or Rs. 365/- per year and the contribution of the Government is Rs. 2/- per day or Rs. 730/- per year per beneficiary.

(c) The State-wise details of number of workers in these categories as on 31st March, 2002 and average work days available to them in a year is not centrally maintained.

Trilateral Highway Project Connecting India, Thailand and Myanmar

*632. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:
SHRI LAJPAT RAI:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether any agreement has been signed between India, Thailand and Myanmar to launch a trilateral highway project linking

the three countries for better connectivity to enhance trade, investment and tourism;

(b) if so, what are the main features of this agreement; and

(c) by when this highway project is likely to be started and completed?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) to (c) A Ministerial Meeting on trilateral transport linkages was held in Yangon, Myanmar on April 5 and 6, 2002 among the Foreign Ministers of India, Thailand and Myanmar. The Meeting agreed on the following areas for cooperation:

(a) construction of a highway from Moreh in India to Mae Sot in Thailand through Bagan in Myanmar, to be completed within a timeframe of two years;

(b) promotion of a highway from Kanchanaburi in Thailand to Dawei deep seaport in Myanmar and shipping links to seaports in India as part and parcel of an integrated package;

(c) promotion of trade, investment and tourism through facilitation of movement of goods and people across borders;

(d) cooperative efforts on human resource development and transfer of technology; and

(e) collective efforts at acquiring funds and advisory services from countries, regional organisations and international financial institutions for the transport linkages.

The Meeting agreed to set up two Task Forces—one on financing and the other on technical matters—to be chaired by Thailand and India respectively. The two task forces are expected to meet in June 2002. The costs and the quantum of India's investment in this project will be known after the reports of the task forces.

The Meeting also agreed to hold Ministerial Meeting of the Foreign Ministers annually which will give policy guidelines to the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM). The SOM would be held annually back-to-back with the ASEAN-India Dialogue SOM and would oversee the cooperation mechanism. The next Ministerial Meeting would be held

in Brunei Darussalam back-to-back with the ASEAN-India Dialogue SOM.

Cooperation between the three countries shall be supportive and complementary to BIMSTEC, Mekong—Ganga Cooperation as well as ASEAN-India Dialogue.

Promotion of SCs/STs at higher level of bureaucracy

*633. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether during the last five decades the proportion of SCs and STs has gone up to some extent only in Group C and D services and not in the higher bureaucracy;

(b) whether since 1996, several obstacles have cropped-up with regard to filling-up of posts reserved for SCs and STs in the form of several judgements of the Supreme Court; and

(c) whether the Department of Personnel and Training has issued several Memoranda to implement orders of the Supreme Court, going beyond the mandate of the Court while amending the promotion rules to the disadvantage of the SCs and STs?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) No Sir. Representation of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs) in services has increased in all the Groups *viz.* A, B, C and D.

(b) Some judgements of the Supreme Court affected the interests of the SCs and STs adversely in the matter of recruitment and in promotions. These obstacles have, however, been removed by the 81st, 82nd and 85th amendments to the Constitution.

(c) No, Sir.